

Technoshamanic Visions from the Underworld II

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Abstract—*Technoshamanic Visions from the Underworld II* is an audio-visual art installation by Jon Weinel. The artwork consists of a video projection in which various analogue and digital animations are created as a compliment to music. While parts of the animations are created with traditional techniques such as painting, other materials are also designed by creating pixel-art and by programming generative computer animations. These are ultimately combined with psychedelic music to form composites, which are mixed live with audio-reactive effects, using the VJ software VDMX. Aesthetically the work draws upon the artist's extensive practice-based research regarding altered states of consciousness.

Keywords—*Visual Music; VJ Culture; Processing; Altered States of Consciousness; Digital Arts; Painting.*

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTWORK

Technoshamanic Visions from the Underworld II is a psychedelic video installation or 'VJ mix' by Jon Weinel. Drawing upon his research regarding altered stated states of consciousness and music (e.g. [1, 2, 3]; for further information see [4]), the videos are based on visual patterns of hallucination, psychedelic experiences of sound-to-vision synaesthesia, and trance-like states of sensory overload. The work also takes inspiration from visual music; the occult films of Harry Smith and Kenneth Anger; Paul Sharits and Pat O'Neill; acid house VJ mixes; and more.

Technically the films are made using a process called 'direct animation' (or 'drawn-on film') [5]. Commercial 8mm cine films are wiped by placing them in a plastic bucket of bleach, and are then rinsed in a bathtub, removing most of the emulsion. Inks and paint are then applied to the films, which are then projected and digitized. Other visual materials are also added using various techniques such as stop-motion animation of dead leaves, decalcomania, geometric computer animations, pixel-art animations and microscope photography. These various materials are mixed live to form composites (Fig.1).



Fig.1. Still image from *Technoshamanic Visions from the Underworld II*. This frame combines: i. photograph taken out of an aeroplane window above South America; ii. geometric computer graphics; iii. hand-painted direct animation on 8mm film, digitized and processed with a kaleidoscope filter.

The computer animations are coded in Processing (Java), and utilise techniques such as applying transformation matrixes to geometric shapes, to produce various forms of motion and rotation. Sine and cosine functions are used to produce oscillating values that control these transformations, and this technique is also applied to colour hues. In some cases, pixel art was created using the touchscreen and stylus of a Nintendo 3DS games console. Individual frames of animation are exported on an SD card and animated as 'sprites' (the term used for small 2D animations in computing) in Processing. These sprites are drawn across the screen, and scroll across it horizontally, while sine functions are used to generate oscillations of movement in the vertical axis. These materials draw inspiration from Atari ST video games and 16-bit consoles such as the Sega Megadrive. Some animations are also written in 3D; for instance, in one sequence we see illuminated spheres moving in oscillating patterns; while another shows a moving tunnel formed from cubes. Such sequences take influence from 'demo scene' computer art [6].

Music is essential in the creation of these films, as I paint and draw to music, and attempt to capture a similar sense of energy, excitement and improvisation that I find in music, within the films. For this presentation of *Technoshamanic Visions from the Underworld II*, the

films are mixed live to a soundtrack of psychedelic rock music by Hibushibire, from Osaka, Japan, from their *Freak Out Orgasm!* album (available on Riot Season records). This soundtrack is preserved here, and is gratefully used with the expressed permission of the band. Sound and vision are combined using the VJ application VDMX, adding audio-reactive effects and using a MIDI mixer as a controller. The output is recorded at 720p, 60fps, using a Blackmagic Hyperdeck Shuttle 2.

The four paintings presented: *Untitled*, *Ginza Jazz Violence*, *Da Mystery Ov Jazz Gorons* and *Squidtrait (Portrait of a Squid)* can be seen as sketches or companion pieces to the videos. These are painted to music using an automatic or stream of consciousness approach, and provide one way through which new themes and ideas emerge, which are later developed through the animations. Both these and the video materials were mainly created while living and working away from home in Denmark, from 2016-2017. In my view they reflect this period as a single cohesive entity, reflecting physical and mental locations at a particular point in time and space.

II. AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Originally from Dorset (UK), Jon Weinel is an artist/writer/researcher whose main expertise is in electronic music and audio-visual media. In 2012 he completed his AHRC-funded PhD in Music at Keele University regarding the use of altered states of consciousness as a basis for composing electroacoustic

music. His work currently operates within the nexus of sound, psychedelic culture and immersive computer technologies. His creative projects have been presented at a variety of international festivals, while his writings have been published in books, journals and conference proceedings. Jon has held academic posts in the UK at Keele University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Glyndwr University, and Aalborg University, Denmark, where he is currently a Postdoc in Music and Sound. He has written a monograph entitled: *Inner Sound: Altered States of Consciousness in Electronic Music and Audio-Visual Media*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2018.

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